

## CHARACTER BASED WALKING TOUR

### Krista Maggart

- Kathleen Johnson  
10 years old  
Parents= William and Margaret  
Siblings= Mary: 5 William Jr.:8
- From the River Mill Café: take Porter St. and then left on Hansen Ave. to Bibb School
  - Talk about the Mill on the way to destination
  - Talk about School and Church
- From School: take long stair case down to the Comer Auditorium
  - Talk about the Comer and play the game "Drop the Handkerchief"
- From the Comer: take Poplar St. to Linden Pt. and around the Linden loop to see Hemlock Park and the Chattahoochee River
  - Talk about Hemlock, the Chattahoochee, and the Boy Scout house
- From Hemlock Park at Linden Pt.: take Park Ave. and then right on Porter St. to end back at the River Mill Café
  - Talk about the houses

### Introduction

Good Afternoon ya'll! My name is Kathleen Johnson. I am twelve years old and I live in Bibb City. My dad works in the mill, that's why I live here. There is no other place in the whole world I would rather live than in this town and I'll tell you why. Because I have everything a girl could ask for! I'll never forget when we moved here 6 years ago in 1948 from Dothan, Alabama. My daddy told me and my momma that we were movin' so we could have a better life. Back in Down Home Alabama my parents had a small farm. I'm glad that we moved here, because this is where my life is now. Everyone here is like a big family! We all take care of one another. If ya'll want, I can show you a few of my favorite places that I go every day! Ya'll follow me, I'll show you around! Ya'll can be a part of my family too!

That right there is the Bibb Mill. I learned in school that it was built about 45 years ago in 1902 and it's still going strong! My daddy works on these big machines called looms. The mill makes things like sheets and pillow cases and even

denim jeans from cotton. They take the cotton and make thread, and then use the thread to make all sorts of things. He works so hard in that Mill. Sometimes he has to pick up extra shifts and he never complains. He always comes home real dirty and Momma makes him leave his shoes outside. He doesn't say much about his job, but I can tell that he loves that mill. It just seems to be a part of him. Well, it's a part of all of us. My whole family is real thankful for what the mill and Bibb City gives us. We were real poor when we were farmers; at least that's what my momma tells me. Now, we are livin' the good life.

Now ya'll, please follow me as close as you can, because my daddy and momma know everyone in this town and if they catch me doin' something I'm not supposed to be doin', I'll get it tonight when I go home!

Like this one time I was supposed to be goin' straight home after school to help momma with dinner, but instead I went down to the river to swim for a little while with some of my friends. By the time I got home, two of our neighbors had already gone and told my momma where I went. I had to go pick a switch off the tree that night. I'll never do that again!

### **School**

Here we are at my school, Bibb City School. I walk here, with my little brother William Jr., every mornin' to get all my lessons for the day. It was built in 1919. My principal is Miss Gardner. She is very nice but very strict. When she comes into a room, everyone gets quiet. If you're not doin' what you ought to, she'll pay your parents a visit at home. In this town, if you get in trouble, everyone knows. But if you do something good, everybody knows that too. We all try to support each other. That's one reason that makes this place so wonderful.

There are many fun activities at school like chorus and band. We take some field trips to places like the Atlanta Zoo. And the girls even have sewing and cooking classes! We girls are taught how to cook and serve food. We must always have good manners like all good girls ought to. I love my school and in 1949 we were even ranked the best school in the county!

My favorite activity to be involved in is the Girl Reserves! My brother is in Boy Scouts but that is just for boys. Us girls, have our own club. The Girl Reserves:

(Put hand over heart)

I WILL TRY TO BE

(Code)

**G**racious in manner  
**I**mpartial in judgment  
**R**eady for service  
**L**oyal to friends

**R**eaching toward the best  
**E**arnest in purpose  
**S**eeing the beautiful  
**E**ager for knowledge  
**R**everent to God  
**V**ictorious over self  
**E**ver dependable  
**S**incere at all times

That is the Girl Reserves Code of Honor. We have to say it before every meeting. We always dress in uniform whenever we go on outings. Blue dresses with white ties, or White dresses with blue ties. People always seem to notice us wherever we go.

## **Church**

Now, we have strict requirements to be in the Girl Reserves. We have to attend Sunday school right across the street at Porter Memorial Baptist Church pretty much every Sunday. In school and in church we have to memorize entire chapters of the Bible and recite them in assemblies. Our teachers from school are also our Sunday School teachers. Girls in the Reserves used to have to have to read assigned books for points, but we don't have to do that anymore. Now, we just have to be able to recite 5 reasons why we are glad to belong to the Bibb family. If we do not meet the qualifications we cannot take any of the exciting trips. One year we went to New York City and the mill paid our entire way!

Come on ya'll lets head on down to the Comer! Follow me, but watch your step! It's a little steep.

That right there is a service alley. I've heard about when Mr. Earle Draper came to Bibb to build the new houses in 1920. He made these little alley ways so that things like coal could be delivered and garbage could be collected in the rear instead of in the front of the house. He also made the entire plan for the sidewalks in the town. I like that he did that because it makes our houses look a lot nicer. We have a big city clean up every year. Awards are even given out for the best yard cleaning job!

## **Comer Auditorium**

This is one of my favorite places, the Comer Auditorium. Now when ya'll follow me in, watch out for Hattie! Hattie is the old black cleaning lady here. She will take a switch to you real quick if you are misbehaving. She's kind of like a babysitter here. The boys always give her a hard time. One of the boys' favorite things to do on the gym floor is to run and slide on the slick floor in their socks. Hattie doesn't like them to do that. She says they are going to break their necks. I think it is kind of fun to watch. Even though the

boys' would like to scare her to death, she always forgives them and always seems to look out for all of us.

The Comer holds many social functions throughout the year. Plays like the annual Christmas Pageant are performed here. The Women's Club has their banquets here. Momma doesn't have time to be involved with that. She has so much to do with the cooking and cleaning. Sometimes gospel singing groups will come and sing. Even if you can't pay to get in, you can still hear the beautiful music around the area. During the summer time they turn one of the rooms into a library for us kids to have a book club. We can read books over the summer to get extra credit for the next school year. Also, there are important basketball tournaments here. Every spring we host the Bibb Invitational tournament. Anybody around the whole county can create a team and play in the tournament. Those boys get real competitive.

There is one thing that the boys do that I quite enjoy doing. My brother taught me a game he learned from Boy Scouts. It's a really fun game to play. If everyone would get in a circle, we could play a quick game of it. I brought my handkerchief just for the occasion.

-Play the game Drop the Handkerchief-

### **Hemlock Park**

Hemlock Park is another place that many entertaining events are held. There are large social gatherings at the park. Like I said, us Bibb folks are like a family. You can always find someone else to play with or something to do. The park is real nice for an afternoon picnic. We play the game I taught ya'll "drop the handkerchief" in the park. There are always boys playing a rough game of football or a game of baseball. Being that it's summer time, I'm surprised there aren't a bunch of them down there playin' baseball right now!

You might notice some trees that have fallen down here and there because last April we had a terrible tornado come through Bibb. I'll never forget spring of 1953. That storm scared us all somethin' awful. Whenever storm clouds come through now, we all take cover. Thank goodness no one in Bibb was hurt, but a total of seven people in Columbus were killed. I'll never forget that storm.

Now, I don't know if ya'll have noticed, but some of the roads in Bibb are straight and some of them are curvy. That Mr. Earle Draper, the one who came down here and designed the new houses, he liked the idea of the curvy streets better than the old block style. Keeps the houses more open to each other I reckon.

That over there is the Chattahoochee River. It's a real nice place to go in the summer time when it gets especially hot. A lot of the boys like to swim way far out to each little island. They are always competing in good fun with one another. I just like to stick by the shore, but it is a nice place to cool off.

This is where my brother goes to all of his boy scout meetings. I don't know what goes on in there; I just stick to the Girl Reserves.

## **Home**

Well, I think it is about time I started home. My daddy will be getting off his shift at the mill soon and I have to help momma with supper. I live in a house with my mom, dad, brother, and sister. I am the oldest. I try to help momma as best I can. Next door, our neighbors are like my family too. The Bushes have lived next to us since we moved here. We live in the same house, but we have separate sides of the house. That's why there are two doors. My friend Sarah Bush is only a year below me in school, but we are the best of friends. Both of her parents work in the mill. One thing our parents tell us about the mill, and have told us since as

long as I can remember, is that we are never to set foot inside! They are very strict about that! That's why I am so involved in church, school, and the Girl Reserves so I can make my parents proud.

### **Conclusion**

Thank ya'll for coming to see my town. I hope you have found it to be as warm and comforting as I find it living here. I have to run on home and help mamma. See ya'll around. Don't you hesitate to come see me again!